GOVDOC
BRA
4691

([illegible])

MEMORANDUM

TO: Distribution

FROM: César R. Zapata Zapata

DATE: December 3, 1986

SUBJECT: "A Basic Guide to the Neighborhood Planning Process"

Apr 03-1190

Enclosed please find a second draft of the booklet which I am editing, outlining the Neighborhood Planning Process.

I shall be most grateful if you review this draft and let me have the benefit of your substantive and editorial comments.

I invite you to share your comments with me at a "Brown Bag Lunch" on Thursday, December 11th, from 12:00 to 1:00 P.M., at the Zoning Conference Room.

If you cannot attend, kindly send your comments in writing with an attending colleague, so that these may be used in our discussion.

Thanks!

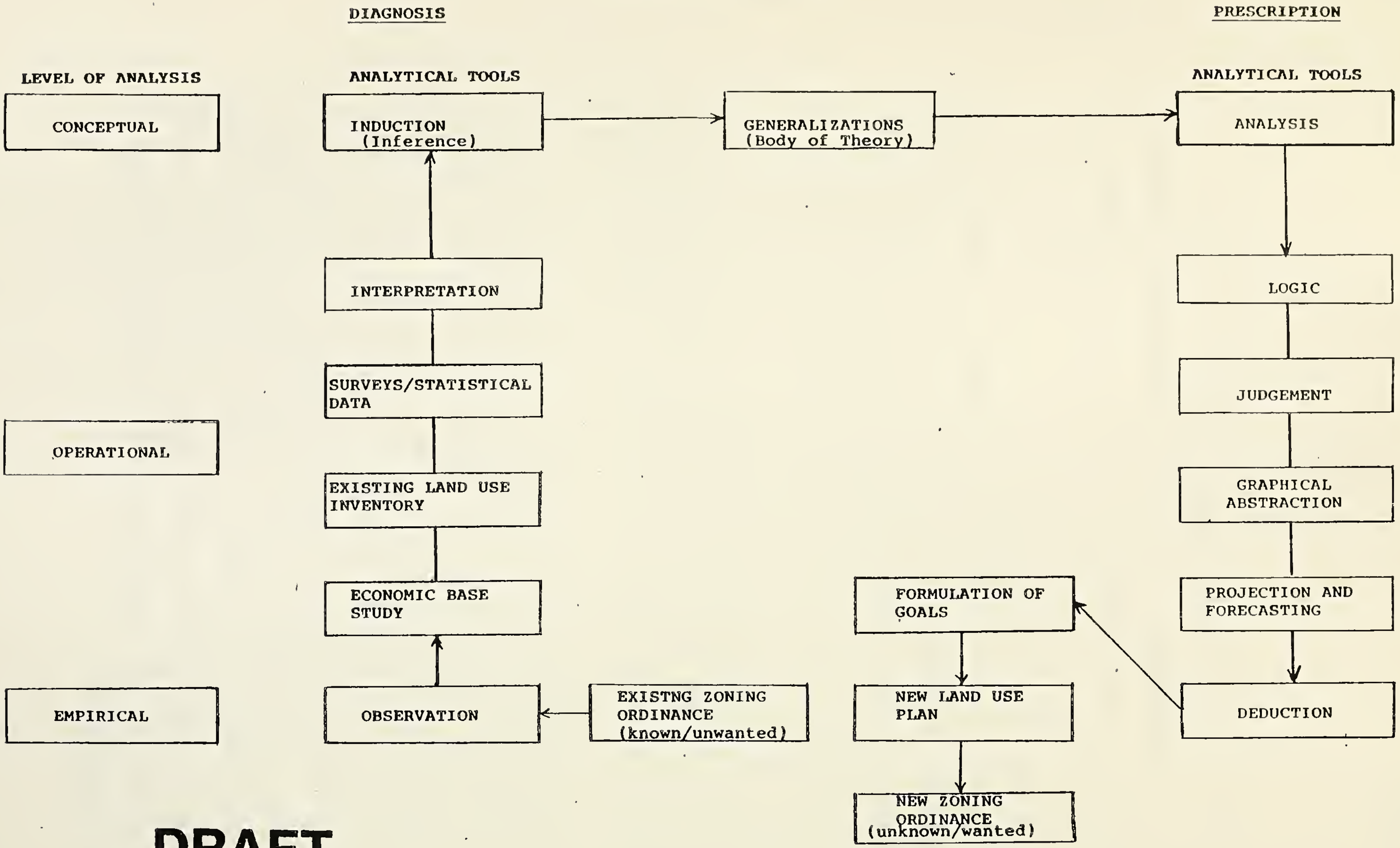
Distribution

J. Bell
L. Bourque
M. Broemel
E. Favorito
B. DeLopez
G. Forbes
J. Hamilton
M. Hildebrand
D. Knowles
L. Koff
L. Lamont
S. Mastrogiacomo
C. Mathieson
M. Monteiro
T. Saravelas
A. Schleifer
A. Torres
C. Wall
J. Walling
E. Wells

BOSTON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

MS2/OO/120386

PLANNING PROCESS DESIGN



DRAFT
For
Discussion Purposes Only

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Boston Public Library

http://www.archive.org/details/basicguidetoneig00bost

Section I - Introduction

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is the city's planning agency. As such, the BRA must ensure a rational, efficient, and uniform planning process. The objective of this booklet is to provide the professional neighborhood planner with a basic guide to the neighborhood planning process. The booklet sequentially describes the phases and levels of analysis in the planning process, the analytical tools needed at each level, and its methodology. This booklet has no pretention to be a "how-to-do-it," nor a guide to a "good" process. It just selects from the extensive literature of planning some basic elements that should be present in the neighborhood planning process, and presents them in ordinal rank.

The neighborhood planning process is bi-dimentional. The first dimension, the external, consists of the phases. The second dimension, the internal, consists of the levels of analysis of the process.

The external dimension consists of two phases: diagnosis and prescription. In the diagnosis phase, the planner establishes the nature of the problem, generally through an inventory of land uses and facts. In the prescription phase, the planner identifies solutions for the problems, normally in the form of a land use plan and zoning ordinance.

The internal dimension consists of three levels: empirical, operational, and conceptual. In this dimension, the process from inventory to proposal, or from diagnosis to prescription, is analyzed critically and in detail.

The second, third, and fourth section of this booklet deal with the observation of phenomena at the empirical, operational and conceptual level, respectively, in the diagnosis phase of the process. The fifth section is devoted to the operationalization of the concepts, and the sixth section outlines and describes the empirical referents, each in the prescription phase of the process.

Section II - The Empirical Level

The empirical level is the lowest level of abstraction in the analysis scale. In the diagnosis phase of the project, the knowledge generated at this level is called common-sense knowledge, which is translated to beliefs which are generally accepted by the majority of the people at a given time. Knowledge at this level is generated primarily through non-scientific observation of phenomena. As such, common-sense knowledge does not discern between concomitance and causality. For example, at the common-sense knowledge level, the relationship between a high incidence of zoning relief (variance) approvals by the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA), and an increase in the burdens associated with high densities (traffic, parking) is ascribed ~~a~~ causality at face value. Following this line of common-sense thinking, causality is also ascribed at face value to the relationship between a high incidence of approved variances and, encroachment, displacement, artificial increase in property values, and so on.

Cause-effect relationship statements become useful when formulated as hypotheses and subjected to the rigor of hypothesis-testing. Using input from

the neighborhood planning advisory group, the neighborhood planner should construct hypotheses from the results obtained from observing the physical, or tangible, components of the neighborhood. For example:

1. Topography

   A. Is the topography of the neighborhood being utilized to its maximum benefit?

   B Do structures avoid physical conditions that increase construction costs?

   C. Are manufacturing buildings sitting in appropriate terrain, where single-story plants can be built with surrounding open space for accessory uses such as employee parking?

2. Buildings

   A. Are buildings designed, and are they sitting according to the established land use patterns of the neighborhood?

3. Structures (Other Than Buildings)

   A. Are utility lines, electric transformer substations and similar structures located so as to assure efficiency without sacrificing the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood?

B. Does the sitting of structures affect abutting and neighboring land uses?

4. Transportation

A. Is the transportation system (avenues, streets, sidewalks, and public transportation) in the neighborhood inducive to the reduced use of private means of transportation (automobiles)?

5. Utilities

A. Are utilities being used to their maximum capacity? Will further land use development have to wait for the installation of new utility lines? Will increased density overload supporting facilities?

6. Open Space

A. Are the open spaces equally distributed throughout the neighborhood, or do they increase toward the periphery of the neighborhood?

B. Does air pollution noticeably degrade the air quality?

C. Does aircraft movement noticeably contributes to noise pollution?

7. Density

A. Is there a noticeably large percentage of parcels of land covered with buildings without open areas in the property?

B. Are buildings noticeably too tall?

C. Is there enough permanent open space provided throughout the neighborhood?

D. Is there a large number of public and private places, such as parks and institutions, requiring large properties?

E. Is the accessibility of the neighborhood to all parts of the city contributing to higher density?

F. Does business and government activity in the neighborhood have each a need to be close to one another?

8. Climate

A. Are the effects of the local climate reflected in the design of the neighborhood buildings? For example, does building design allow for a balance between indoor and outdoor activity?

9. Vegetation

B. Is the vegetation decreasing as the neighborhood grows and density increases?

10. Aesthetic Quality

A. Is the neighborhood clean?

B. Is outdoor advertising, signs, and billboards aesthetically acceptable, and a correct expression of the culture that produces it?

C. Are buildings well designed individually, and collectively compatible to contribute significantly to urban beauty?

D. If there is a dense concentration, is there sufficient open space to provide relief from the characteristic walled-in feeling of dense situations?

11. Urban Design

A. Are there many places intended for visual pleasure as well as spatial enjoyment, such as:

    a. monuments,
    b. small parks,
    c. gardens, and
    l.c.
    d. Museums?

B. Are the streets and avenues designed to enhance the aesthetic quality of the city?

C. Is there adequate street furniture?

12. Change

A. Have new structures and installations been built in the neighborhood?

B. Are the buildings being remodeled to accommodate changes in use?

C. Are variances permitting a higher and better use of property triggering similar changes on adjacent properties?

13. The Dominant Power Coalition

A. Who are the participating government actors?

B. What non-governmental people, organizations, and activities will most likely participate in the coalition?

1. Associations (neighborhood, business, ad hoc or permanent).

2. Politics (broadly defined - bureaucratic politics, personal).

3. Religion.

4. Financial institutions (bond and insurance ratings).

5. Individuals.

C. Characteristically, actors in a coalition avoid seeking to maximize individual positions. Where do the interests of the coalition lie?

The empirical level in the prescription phase will be discussed in Section Six.

Section III - The Operational Level

At the operational level of analysis hypotheses are tested or concepts are operationalized, depending on the phase of the process, diagnosis or prescription, respectively. This section deals with the operational level in the diagnostic phase. The operational level in the prescription phase will be discussed in Section Five.

To ensure a thorough testing of hypotheses, the planner must conduct a series of technical studies of the neighborhood. The type and scope of the studies to be performed depend on the planner's judgement and discretion. However, an economic base study and an existing land use inventory are mandatory.

1. The Economic Base Study

Preparation of an economic base study is clearly justifiable in terms of planning doctrine because the neighborhood planner needs reliable information on market forces to establish real demand for housing, goods and services.

2. Existing Land Use Inventory

A land use inventory is no more than a compilation of available data about the physical aspects of the neighborhood. In order for the inventory to be useful, it must contain the following minimum information:

A. Map the neighborhood on 200-scale base maps, showing the use and size of every lot in the neighborhood.

B. Reduce the maps to 1:1000 scale to permit greater perspective.

C. Superimpose census data for each block showing:

   a. Types of structures.

   b. Population density.

   c. Number of dwelling units per type.

d. Dilapidated structures.

D. Calculate the following data:

a. The total amount of land in each category of land use.

b. The net land per dwelling unit for each type of residential structure, from single-family through multi-family.

c. The average number of dwelling units per net residential acre.

d. The average number of dwelling units per gross acre.

E. Inspect physically each street in the neighborhood to note extraordinary features not shown on base maps.

3. Other Surveys and Statistical Data

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, the neighborhood planner must conduct other studies which, in his judgement, will assist to thoroughly test his hypotheses. These studies or surveys must be sufficient in scope and nature as to provide the planner with adequate statistical data on the following:

a. Population size.

b. Population composition:

- age,
- ethnicity.

c. Population change:

- birth,
- death,
- people moving in,
- people moving out.

d. Spatial location, or the identification and analysis of the socio-economic implications of spatial disposition of people and land uses.

e. Competition with other neighborhoods for economic benefits.

f. Public economy.

g. Federal support.

h. Special assessment districts.

i. Private economy.

- Influence of Chamber of Commerce, Boards of Trade, and other business organizations.

- Adjustment between public purpose and the spatial needs of businesses and industry.

j. Diversification.

k. Financing.

l. Economic environment.

m. Special economy (non-profit, volunteer, tax-exempt organizations).

Section IV - The Conceptual Level

At the conceptual level of analysis, after thorough interpretation of observed facts, empirical data, and hypothesis testing, through induction, the planner needs to infer a set of generalizations, or body of theory. In order for these generalizations to be useful to the process, they should have the following characteristics:

1. Explain the phenomena under observation.
2. Predict future behavior.
3. Prescribe courses of action.

Section V - Operationalization of the Concepts

At the operational level of analysis in the prescription phase of the process, the planner operationalizes the generalizations inferred at the conceptual level. ~~These~~ Cap. generalizations ARE too abstract to have any practical value, so the planner has to operationalize these so that they may have practical applications. In other words, after the planner has made a diagnosis, he has to prescribe a remedy using logic and good judgement.

Projection and Forecasting

Projection and forecasting are indispensable analytical tools to operationalize concepts. Laymen expect planners to predict. Planners may make their forecasts come true if they win community approval for the execution of their plans. If planners project a clear image of future conditions and requirements, they will more likely make an impression on busy civic leaders. The more the planners' recommendation is made to appear inescapeable, the less controversial they are bound to be.

It is risky and professionally unethical to express with certainty estimates which may prove to be wrong. Therefore, the planner must note that all projections are uncertain, but at the same time emphasize the sophistication of the methods used. The planner must endeavor to convey an impression of confidence and professionalism.

Projection and forecasting are necessary analytical tools to draft a land use plan and a zoning regulation. Through projection and forecasting the planner must be able to:

1. Forecast population changes.

2. Estimate land-to-population ratios for each major category of land use.

3. Indicate the direction that change will likely take in the absence of new governmental efforts to control it.

4. Show the possibilities of purposeful action.

Section VI - The Empirical Referents

At the empirical level of analysis in the prescription phase of the process, the planner will outline the practical application -- the empirical referents-- of the concepts he has developed throughout the process.

The empirical referents in the planning process will be the new land use plan and zoning ordinance. To formulate the new land use plan and zoning ordinance, the following process should be followed:

1. Formulation of Goals

Projection and forecasting are articulated in the formulation of goals.

Goals should be formulated in a general fashion, and should reflect the rational pursuit of the public interest. Goals should establish:

A. Planning principles. These should be general pronouncements which establish priorities, i.e., "to protect neighborhoods from invading uses, large volumes of traffic, hindrances to development, and blight." This hypothetical principle clearly establishes the thesis that neighborhoods should be a high priority object of public policy.

B. Recommend policies for each category of land use. These should be policy-choice recommendations based on the data which has been gathered, i.e., "the location of new business areas should be justified by an adequate market radius, estimated customer potential, suitable location in the market radius, and consideration for the neighborhood circulation pattern." This hypothetical policy-choice recommendation establishes the conditions upon which land will be classified for business uses.

C. Planning standards. These should be a set of locally accepted standards which are:

  a. specific,
  b. clearly stated,
  c. just, and
  d. workable

to guide land use development. For example, "the city should have one acre of land for recreational use for each 100 residents." This hypothetical standard establishes a direct ratio of recreational use land per inhabitant. Planning standards are not minimum or maximum. Planing standards are workable solutions to the demand for scarce resources, product of negotiation and coalition building.

2. New Land Use Plan

Planning is a policy-choice problem which includes, to the extent directly related to urban needs, the preparation of general physical plans for land use and the provision of public facilities, including transportation facilities, and the preparation of supporting regulatory and administrative measures.

A land use plan does not indicate where each school, park, street, etc., should be located. A land use plan states principles of desirable spatial relationships between them. Its most general conclusions are expressed on the land use map, which shows the use or uses that should be permitted in each parcel of land in the city.

Land use plans are written to protect all uses from each other. As such, they must:

1. promote the common good,

2. assure that the entire city will become a better place to live, and

3. its policies should not only concern themselves with the efficient functioning of the city, but also with its appearance and liveability.

3. New Zoning Ordinance

Zoning is a tool to guide growth according to the goals and objectives of a community as set forth in the land use plan. Zoning manages the direction, impact, benefits and burdens of growth. The new zoning ordinance will identify various zones for specific land uses such as residential, commercial and manufacturing. Also, the new zoning code will identify and establish land use controls such as:

1. Subdivision.

2. Cumulative/exclusive zoning.

3. Non-conforming uses.

4. Inclusionary zoning.

5. Conditional use.

6. Overlay districts.

7. Solar zoning.

8. Cluster zoning.

9. Development rights and their transfer.

10. Building height.

11. Flight plane zoning.

12. Historical zones.

13. Outdoor billboard advertising.

14. Video/arcades/pornography/prostitution/liquor.

15. Performance zoning.

16. Managed growth zoning.

17. Special condition (i.e., linkage).

18. Mixed land uses.

19. Taking of owners vested rights.

20. Taxation.

21. Coastal commission.

References

Altshuler, Alan A., The City Planning Process A Political Analysis, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975.

Banerjee, Tridib and William C. Baer, Beyond The Neighborhood Unit, Residential Environments and Public Policy, New York: Plenum Books, 1984.

Branch, Melville C., Comprehensive City Planning Introduction and Explanation, Washington, D.C.: American Planning Association, 1985.

Chapin, F. Stuart, Urban Land Use Planning, New York: Harper & Sons, 1957.

Goodman, William I. and Eric C. Freund, Principles and Practice of Urban Planning, Washington, D.C.: International City Management Association, 1968.

Hagman, Donald G., Public Planning and Control of Urban and Land Development, Cases and Materials, St. Paul, MI: West Publishing, 1973.

Hunter, Floyd, Community Power Structure, A Study of Decision-Makers, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1953.

Krueckeberg, Donald A. and Arthur L. Silvers, Urban Planning Analysis: Methods and Models, New York: Wiley & Sons, 1974.

Netzer, Dick, Economic and Urban Problems, Diagnosis and Prescriptions, New York: Basic Books, 1970.

Reilly, William K. (Editor), The Use of Land: A Citizen's Policy Guide to Urban Growth, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973.

Robinson, Ira M., Decision-Making in Urban Planning, An Introduction to New Methodologies, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishers, 1972.

Shannon, Thomas R., Urban Problems in Sociological Perspective, New York: Random House, 1983.